

Appendix B

Supplementary paper for Business Infrastructure and Growth Committee

Committee Date: 16 January 2025

Introduction

Management team (MAT) reviewed the Spelthorne Business Forum's application for a grant on 7 January 2025 before it is submitted to Committee and then Council. They felt that the response provided for the previous year (which is this current year) did not answer the question, there could be more to measuring success and more detail on how the money will be used in 2025/26, especially as value for money and value to businesses has not been articulated.

Questions posed by MAT where as follows:

- 1 Measuring success: Is the success measured by the impact of your events, and the increase in membership numbers which would be evidenced by feedback and surveys rather than the number of events held and the number of subscribers to a newsletter?
- 2 Please provide a detailed report that clearly demonstrates what your objectives were, how you matched the grant funding to the objectives, did you meet your objectives and how did you measure your success? The Committee will need to see more detail on this.
- 3 In your response to 2025/26 How you will measure success, is the intention to increase Spelthorne members? How many do you have and how many therefore is 5% of an increase? Please can you provide a baseline (national average) for open rate and click rate, what you currently receive and how you see that increasing?
- 4 Regarding the networking events, traditionally there seems to be businesses who attend on a regular basis – so what is your intention regarding attracting newcomers to the event and do you have a target for that?

The response from The Spelthorne Business Forums board is as follows:

Currently, our membership baseline stands at approximately 1,000 members. This figure varies daily due to new members joining and others leaving their organizations and subsequently unsubscribing. Our goal is to not only increase the total number of members but also expand into specific targeted sectors. However, defining these sectors will be challenging at this stage since we are in the process of implementing numerous new events, projects, and web features before we can focus on sector-specific initiatives.

With this context in mind, as a minimum baseline we are aiming for a 5% growth target, which translates to an additional 50 members.

With the above in mind and in answer to your first question here is an example;

We are excited to announce our inaugural industry-focused event taking place in March. This event will cater specifically to the construction and property sectors, aiming to encourage businesses to transition into the retrofit market. By addressing skill gaps, we aspire to contribute towards a Carbon Neutral Spelthorne and Surrey.

The event will be promoted widely across Surrey to the construction and property sector and hosted in Staines Upon Thames.

Our goal is not only to attract new members from these sectors but also to forge partnerships that support local job initiatives and skills development through collaboration with the local jobs hub, DWP, Surrey County Council and various stakeholders in the retrofit sector. Additionally, this endeavour aligns with Spelthorne's carbon reduction targets.

While it can be challenging to measure the outputs and outcomes of such events, we believe they are crucial for fostering sustainable growth in our community.

Each of our events and projects is designed with the needs and requirements of the local business community in mind, while also aligning with the roles and objectives set out by Spelthorne Council in their Economic Strategy.

Our goal for every project, interaction, or event is to enhance the economic prosperity of Spelthorne. We strive to raise awareness about the Council's role in supporting our community and foster connections among stakeholders and partners who are responsible for delivering government-funded support.

Additionally, we aim to unite corporate partners to expand their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) outreach within Spelthorne.

For instance, we are thrilled to announce that British Airways has agreed to become a Corporate Sponsor. We are currently collaborating with their Community Team to develop a plan that will bolster their Community Outreach Program in Spelthorne.

Above are examples of how the SBF will utilise the grant fund to offer maximum value for taxpayers.

Networking Events

As a membership organization dedicated to a small, targeted business community, we are pleased to offer our members a consistent meeting platform. Every organization that provides such opportunities will always have its share of "regulars." To enhance participation, we actively promote our events through various partner platforms, including (but not limited to) Surrey Chambers of Commerce, West London Chambers of Commerce, FSB, Business Surrey, Surrey Events Group, IOD, and Eventbrite.

In addition to our traditional networking sessions, we are excited to introduce themed events that cater to different business sectors and topics. Our regular networking gatherings will also include opportunities for members to take the stage as guest speakers in their areas of expertise.

These initiatives create a diverse and engaging environment for both our established attendees and newcomers alike.